

Desperate.

of Schouwen, was being slowly worn down by Mondragon during the winter of 1575-76, and Holland and Zealand were rent asunder.

Once more the outlook for the patriots became desperate, and Orange, with the approval of the Estates, now made serious offers of the sovereignty of the provinces to Elizabeth. Elizabeth declined, and William then turned to the Duke of Alencon, in the hope of buying the protection of France at the price of transferring their allegiance from Philip to the brother of Henry III. This negotiation was equally barren, and he is said to have conceived the desperate idea of collecting a vast fleet to carry a whole people with their goods and chattels to some land of refuge across the ocean, after consigning the Dutch flats to that element from which their forefathers had won it. The scheme, if it really floated through his mind, was only the suggestion of a pessimistic moment. His letters show no sign of waning courage, no faltering of faith in Providence. Even before the capture of Ziericksee the sky began to clear once more. Requesens was cut off by a fever in March 1576, and the government of Philip was paralysed by the sudden event. At William's instigation, Viglius, Berlaymont, and several other members of the Council of State, which for the nonce immediately represented the sovereign, were arrested and imprisoned on the 4th September. Worse still, Philip was not only without a government, but without an army, for the terrible mutiny, which culminated in the Spanish Fury at Antwerp, had broken out. The men who had waded and fought their way to the ocean claimed their reward in the wholesale pillage of the richest city on earth. And Antwerp was not the only victim of the horrible orgy of loot and debauchery. From Schouwen backwards into Brabant and Flanders the mutinous host swelled and ebbed to and fro, spreading terror, carnage, destruction, hatred, in its track before it spent its fury on the great emporium on the Scheldt.

It was now the turn of the southern provinces to experience what the military despotism, which Philip and his representatives called government, meant. They did not relish the experience throughout that awful summer, and it at last maddened them into revolt, and forced them, Catholic though